

Curtis a pioneer ahead of her time

Margaret tirelessly promoted 'women's tees' in the early 1900s but few paid attention

Alice Dye's campaign for forward tee markers recalls the dream of the pioneer in that movement.

Margaret Curtis of Essex County Club in Manchester, Mass., who with sister Harriot donated the Curtis Cup which is played for alternately in England and the United States by selected teams of amateur women, was an unflagging advocate of that revolutionary idea.

Margaret, Ladies' National Amateur champion in 1907, 1911 and 1912, didn't rest on those laurels. She was tirelessly devoted and innovative in promoting golf.

The Curtis sisters' membership at Essex dated from the club founded in July 1893.

The late Eugene S. "Skip" Wogan, Essex professional from 1907 to 1954, recalled spending many a morning on the course with Margaret, measuring distances to determine length of carry from the women's tee.

She would often demonstrate the futility of women trying to meet par on certain holes, and the difficulty in carrying over water hazards set up for men.

Wogan's son, Philip A., now a golf course architect based in Topsfield, Mass., didn't escape Margaret's missionary zeal.

"However," he added, "she'd break up these serious sessions with her latest 'Silly Billy' joke."

Margaret's sports interest was not confined to golf.

In 1908 at Philadelphia, Pa., Margaret paired with Evelyn Sears for the Ladies' Tennis Doubles championship. Still holding the national golf title, she became the only woman to have held both national titles concurrently.

Margaret was as persuasive as

she was talented.

Recovering from an appendectomy in 1906, she was not allowed to play golf. Margaret forced Harriot to practice — and practice — pitching and putting. That persistence, and insistence, paid off. Harriot triumphed at Brae Burn Country Club in West Newton, Mass.

The next year, Margaret was back in competitive shape. Margaret and Harriot qualified first and second at Chicago, Ill., wound up in opposite halves of the draw and gained the finals. Margaret won, was the champion four years later at Baltusrol Ccountry Club in Springfield, N.J., and, in a crowning touch, prevailed for a third time in 1912 at her home course.

Margaret campaigned hard for a forward movement in women's tees. In 1963, she wrote:

"If a Good Girl is obliged to play a wood club to greens which a Good Man can readily reach with a pitching club, then something probably is wrong.

"Because we women play our golf on courses primarily laid out for men, courses for us are a good deal harder than the architect intended, and relatively much harder than for men.

"As one proof, women's par on most courses is higher than men's par, even though USGA yardages for guidance in computing par make due allowance for men's physical superiority. Ideally, should not par be the same for both sexes?

"Let's consider the shot to the putting green, the most crucial shot in golf for women.

"Most greens have interesting surroundings, with bunkers,



Margaret Curtis, right, with her sister Harriot

mounds, hollows and generally unlevel surfaces. Such greens usually call for pitch-shot approaches, some with appreciable backspin. But is a pitch the shot which the Good Girl is asked to play?

"Women's dilemma is further complicated when greens are pro-

tected by brooks, ponds and other water hazards. Tactical golfing problems which are merely interesting for men can be serious ones for women."

Margaret cited a hole more than 500 yards long that had no women's tee, "although the terrain would easily have accommodated one."

"A brook crossed the whole fairway at just the questionable distance for two good woods. The sensible woman usually played short, using perhaps a 5 iron to be safe. Then she had to approach the green with a 2-wood." (For the modern woman golfer, that weapon is a now-outmoded brassie. It's too hard to control and hasn't enough clubface loft.)

"Where courses do not have proper women's tees, what steps can be taken?

"First, a careful course study, including knowledge of what clubs the Good Men use to approach each green. Then, a definite program. In the main, men's golf committees have been sympathetic to women's tees.

"Making and maintaining women's tees is not prohibitive in cost. It is a real asset for a club to have a course as popular for women as for men.

"Naturally, we don't want our course made too easy. Stiff courses help players improve. But why not the same par for men and women on each course?"

It's pretty hard to argue against a competitor in the USGA's Women's Amateur Championship 25 times over a 50-year span, the first in 1897, twice runnerup in addition to three titles, and six times medalist.

In 1958, at age 73 and a player for 64 years, Miss Curtis became the fourth winner of the Bob Jones Award for distinguished sportsmanship in golf.

She was termed "a great lady, a great golfer who through the years in every move made in golf has been one of the greatest sports-women of all time."

ASU chooses Phoenix firm

The Sun Angel Foundation has chosen Jones Studio, Inc., a Phoenix, Ariz., firm, to design the clubhouse for the Karsten Golf Course at Arizona State University.

Foundation President Robert Davies said Jones will be responsible for designing a \$3.5-million, 24,000-square-foot clubhouse at the course which will open in September.

"Groundbreaking will take place after the money has been raised by the Sun Angel Foundation," Davies said.

Henry DeLozier, president of Resort Management of America, the course's management company, said, "Jones' energy level and ingenious solutions to typical golf course problems made this decision a simple one."

Groups donate to Cornell research

Announced as major contributors to the New York State Turfgrass Association's Matching Funds Program at the NYSTA's annual gathering were the Fingerlakes Association of GCS, the Women's Association of the Fingerlakes, Pocono Turfgrass Association and Hudson Valley GCSA.

Joseph Hahn of Oak Hill Country Club was an individual contributor to the 2-year-old program which supports turfgrass research at Cornell University.

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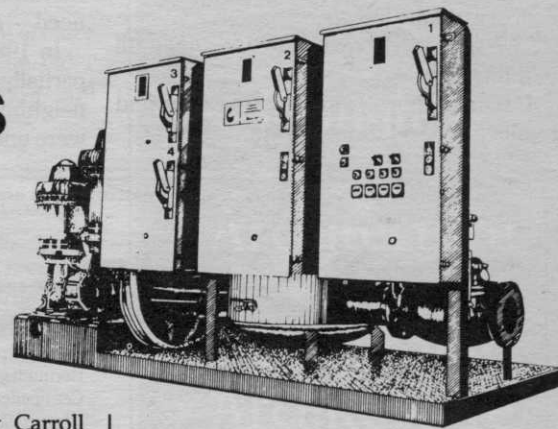
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